

LOVE AND SERVICE

An Address of Welcome

to

The First Western URANTIA Conference

at

Los Angeles, California

June 29, 1973

by

E. L. Christensen

President of URANTIA Brotherhood

A URANTIA Service

ADDRESS OF WELCOME
TO
FIRST WESTERN CONFERENCE AT LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
JUNE 29, 1973
BY
E. L. CHRISTENSEN, PRESIDENT OF URANTIA BROTHERHOOD

LOVE AND SERVICE

The prophet Isaiah once said: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring good tidings." And as I look upon your cheerful faces, I feel the good tidings you bring here today. You are the soldiers of the circles, seeking the Father's will for your lives.

And doubt not that what you seek shall be given to you manyfold. To those who seek, it shall be given. To those who knock, the door shall be opened. If you are sincere, the Father's will begins to unfold in your lives. But this will not lead you to a life of monotony and blissful ease. Just the opposite. It will lead to the *"organization of your soul for dynamic service." p.1096:7 Service to others will be a central and compelling characteristic of your lives through all eternity. *"Service--more service, increased service, difficult service, adventurous service, and at last divine and perfect service--is the goal of time and the destination of space." p.316:5

To become more perfect in service, we must first become more perfect in our love. For love and service are forever united. Love precedes and creates the impulse to serve, energizes it. *"Love is the desire to do good to others." p.649:5 Service is doing good. Service is the act of love, the completion of love.

*"All true love originates in God. And we are bathed in it every moment of our lives. But we become conscious of this divine affection only as we ourselves bestow this love upon our fellows. Love is dynamic. It can never be captured; it is alive, free, thrilling, and always moving. We can never take the love of the Father and imprison it within our own hearts. The Father's love becomes real to us only by passing through us as we in turn come to love our fellow men." p.1289:4

Atoms can reveal mathematics. Flowers and stars and mountains and sunsets can reveal beauty. The biological order can reveal life in its ascending series. And even history can reveal and vindicate a moral order. But only personalities can reveal love, and assure us that love is at the heart of things.

*"Love is the supreme relationship, the greatest of all spiritual realities." p.1608:1 And we learn this through the patient teaching of the divine lover who lives in us, through our responsiveness to the leadings of the indwelling spirit of God. He teaches us to remove the center of our attention from ourselves to someone else.

The idea of doing good to others--to deny the ego something for the benefit of a neighbor--has come down to us through a long and slow evolution. Man once regarded as neighbors only those who were very close to him. But as civilization advanced, the concept of a neighbor expanded to embrace the clan, the tribe, the nation. And then Jesus enlarged the idea of what is a neighbor to embrace the whole of humanity, even that we should love our enemies. *"And there is something inside of every normal human being that tells him this teaching is moral and right. Even those who practice this ideal least admit that it is right in theory." p.1134:1

The high levels of human living that Jesus attained grew out of his supreme love of God and unselfish love of man. *"Jesus loved men so much because he placed a high value on them." p.1098:2 He understood their motives and their destiny. And he *"taught men to place a high value upon themselves in time and eternity. Because of this high estimate which Jesus placed upon men, he was willing to spend himself in the unremitting service of humankind." p.2093:5

*"He did not teach that the essence of his religion consists of social service, but rather that social service is one of the certain effects of the possession of the spirit of true religion." p.1769:10

*Religious experience means that we become conscious of having found God. And when we first experience the thrill of God, our souls begin to bubble up with an indescribable restlessness of triumph. The discovery makes us so alive that we are impelled to seek loving service-contact with our less illuminated fellows, not necessarily to disclose that we have found God, but rather to allow the overflow of the welling up of eternal goodness within our souls to refresh and ennoble our fellows. Real religion simply and naturally leads to increased social service. p.1121:7 This is the way it came about in the life of Jesus, and the way it comes about in our own.

As you think of Jesus and take inspiration from his life, remember how he went about his work, how relaxed and unhurried he was. So much of what he did to elevate all mankind, he did as he "passed by," as he was on his way somewhere.

The Master had a profound and sympathetic regard for every human being he met. The disciples were tremendously impressed by this uniform and unvarying consideration which he so consistently gave to all sorts of men, women, and children. *"He would pause in the middle of a profound discourse that he might go out in the road to speak good cheer to a passing woman laden with her burden of body and soul. He would interrupt a serious conference with his apostles to fraternize with an intruding child. Nothing ever seemed so important to Jesus as the individual human who chanced to be in his immediate presence." p.1545:11

Jesus taught that all service is sacred and exhilarating in the lives of the spirit led. *He was very fond of doing things, even little things, for other people. p.1461:3

*"Become interested in your fellows; learn how to love them and watch for the opportunity to do something for them which you are sure they want done," p.1439:1

He taught that when you devote your life to living the Father's will, you are *"inwardly illuminated by worship and outwardly devoted to the wholehearted service of the universal brotherhood." p.1175:2 *He taught that the closer we come to God the more useful we become to our fellow beings. p.1096:2.

Do you recall how Jesus went about his personal ministry? Time after time the situation that enabled him to provide his greatest service was the action of one person helping another. This was central to so much of what he did. It might be that someone came to him for help, or in some way made a signal that help was needed. Or, it might be that Jesus would ask someone for help, perhaps some simple thing like the direction to some place he wanted to go. The action of one person helping another relaxes both. There is an aroma of friendliness and warmth. Defenses are not raised up. Truth thrives in such an atmosphere.

And Jesus was always *"minded to say or do something to make...life richer and more worthwhile!" (p.1460:6) for everyone he met--*to offer practical suggestions when someone needed help, to tell them about the love of God, to let them see in some way that they are children of this loving Father in heaven. p.1461:1

*"As a rule, to those he taught the most, he said the least. Those who derived most benefit from his personal ministry were overburdened, anxious, and dejected mortals who gained much relief because of the opportunity to unburden their souls to a sympathetic and understanding listener..." p.1460:7

He was a joyful man. *"His constant word of exhortation was, 'Be of good cheer.'" p.1102:6 All of us can share the Master's joy, through sharing his love, his service. p.1945:3

Good humor and the smile of happiness are among the most powerful and influential of the human assets of religious propagation.

What he asks of us is *"loyalty, not sacrifice...The consciousness of sacrifice implies the absence of that wholehearted affection which would have made such a loving service a supreme joy. The idea of duty signifies that you are servant-minded and hence are missing the mighty thrill of doing your service as a friend and for a friend. The impulse of friendship transcends all convictions of duty, and the service of a friend for a friend can never be called a sacrifice." p.1945:4

Keep in mind the example of Jesus when you recall that each day, each hour--constantly--God is sending us people, circumstances, affairs which will offer us starting points, or testing points, in this rugged achievement

of the Paradise adventure. If we accept every hour of our life as the hour of God's will concerning us--as the decisive, most important hour of our life--what sources of joy, love, and strength, as yet hidden from us, would spring from the depths of our soul.

When people or events come before us, or when we rise up to seek them out from the upwelling of the spontaneous love in our hearts, we can draw some helpful lessons from the supernal life that Jesus lived.

Jesus always put first things first. He raised up his family to its maturity before he embarked upon the Father's business. He was always practical and recognized the necessity of attending to earthly duties. He taught that we do not have to go to distant lands to serve, we can begin our service right in our own home, with our parents, brothers, sisters, wife, husband, children. He told us that it is "the divine will that men and women should find their highest service and consequent joy in the establishment of homes for the reception and training of children." p.1839:5 *For in this act we become copartners with the Makers of heaven and earth. p.1839:5 You can begin your life of service at your place of work, or where you play. You begin wherever you are.

Jesus always had his priorities straight. *He did not confuse duty to God and duty to Caesar. p.1114:4 He said to the Roman centurion: "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things which are God's. The sincere service of God and the loyal service of Caesar do not conflict unless Caesar should presume to arrogate to himself that homage which alone can be claimed by Deity." p.1474:4

Jesus was no respecter of persons. *"He met and loved all manner of men, rich and poor, high and low, black and white, educated and uneducated, cultured and uncultured, animalistic and spiritual, religious and irreligious, moral and immoral." p.1424:4 He was always consistent in his love. But he especially took time to minister to the forlorn, the downtrodden, the helpless, the sick and suffering. And he reminds us all through the ages that, "inasmuch as you minister to one of the least of my brethren, you have done this service to me." p.1917:2

He spoke to the spirit of God within all men, and therefore he never employed dramatic or flamboyant techniques. He served his *spiritual food in attractive form p.1474:3, but he did not try to overpower or outwit those whom he was trying to help. *Notwithstanding his absolute assurance and the staunchness of his attitude, the spirit of his expression was so poised and tempered that it never conveyed the slightest impression of self-assertion or egoistic exaltation. p.1119:7 *He controlled his enthusiasm; he did not let it control him. p.1102:9 He possessed his soul in patience.

One of the most important things to remember about Jesus is the beautiful symmetry of his personality. "Behold the man!" Too often we have seen those who serve become reckless and sentimental and impatient, or who conceive of their service as something that must be grim and humorless, even

tinged with fanaticism. Extreme virtue becomes a vice. But this was never true of Jesus. For all his magnificent love, he was never carried away to any extreme. But the service concept has suffered from centuries of tragic misinterpretation by those who have become extremists in the name of noble ideals. When the personality is not unified, *"the altruistic drive may become so over-developed as to work serious injury to the welfare of the self. A misguided conscience can become responsible for much conflict, worry, sorrow, and no end of human unhappiness." p.1132:1 It is time for us to show by example what service really means. And in the life of the Master, we have before us an inspiring ideal of perfect balance.

*"Jesus always insisted that true goodness must be unconscious, in bestowing charity not allowing the left hand to know what the right hand does." p.1583:1 Don't waste your energies in idle wondering about how good you are; don't keep feeling your spiritual pulse. The angels will always disclose with utmost truth to those who measure our progress what are *"the deep motives of the human heart." p.316:7 The important thing is that the notion of service become so much a part of the fabric of our beings that we simply do not think very much about it. It is simply what we are. When we give, we give quietly, as Jesus did, without fanfare.

Everything good that we ever do survives for all eternity, not only in our experience as a pilgrim of the heavens, but also in the experience of the Supreme Being, who will be with us in the eternal adventure.

*"The secret of greatness in the spiritual kingdom is not like the methods of power in the material world." p.1940:1 *The highest levels of self-realization you can ever achieve, here or hereafter, can only be achieved the way Jesus did it, through worship and service. p.1572:6

*The entire ascendant plan of mortal progression is characterized by the practice of giving out to others new truth and experience just as soon as we acquire it. We work our way through the long school of Paradise attainment by service as teachers to those pupils just behind us in the school of progression. p.339:7 *"Those who are most advanced in any line of endeavor are required constantly to impart their superior knowledge and skill to their less favored fellows." p.498:2

Throughout the universe, *the privilege of service immediately follows the discovery of trustworthiness. Nothing can stand between us and opportunity for increased service except our own untrustworthiness, our lack of capacity for appreciation of the solemnity of trust. p.316:4

All who take up a life of service are destined to know more about defeats and disappointments than about success and triumphs--unless, and until, we learn not to invest our emotions in the behavior outcomes of those we serve. We must be wise and intelligent in our love.

Even the matchless personality of Jesus could not turn the hearts of those in whom love had died. *Jesus' last appeal to the deserting Judas was of no avail. When love is gone, even the most tactful and kindly warning, as a rule, only intensifies hatred and fires the evil determination to carry out to the full one's own selfish projects. p.1941:6 But men like these are the small minority of the human race.

As we go forth into the world, let us not be daunted by the emptiness and the anguish that may so often surround us. Just as Michael selected URANTIA to offer all the more of a striking backdrop against which he would portray his supernal life of loving service, so can we, in this troubled and turbulent age, offer all the more of a striking contrast to the confusion around us. . .

- . . . in the serenity of our purpose,
- . . . in the conviction of our worth and eternal destiny,
- . . . in our assurance of the Father's infinite love for us,
- . . . in the great value we place on every other human being,
- . . . in our discipline and liberating self-mastery,
- . . . in the practical and relaxed nature of our ministry,
- . . . in our joy, our humor, and enthusiasm,
- . . . our wholeness and spiritual health,
- . . . graciousness and friendliness,
- . . . and above all, in our loyalty to the Father's will.

Do not for a moment doubt that we will increasingly stand out against the spiritual darkness all around us. Men will seek after us to gain what we have acquired. We will become the visible spiritual beacons who will guide men homeward to satisfy the hunger for truth and righteousness. As we seek the Father's help in finding the way that is best for us, as we come to an increasing comprehension of his divine and perfect life plan for each of us, we will become centers of light and life who will illuminate the world with the love of God. We will begin to love men *with a new and startling affection, an amazing devotion (p.2044:3) that *will help them learn to love one another (p.1955:6), even as Jesus still sends his love to us every moment of our lives.

*"The call to the adventure of building a new and transformed human society by means of the spiritual rebirth of Jesus' brotherhood of the kingdom should thrill all who believe in him as men have not been stirred since the days when they walked about the earth as his companions in the flesh." p.2084:6

As individual Urantians we each have our part to act in the reorganization of human society. Let us therefore become so saturated with the fragrant truths of this revelation that all persons coming in contact with us will feel that we are truth lovers and spiritual explorers, that we are cosmic citizens engaged in the fascinating adventure of searching for God and dedicated to the supreme passion of doing his divine will.

And when life on this earth is finished, may we all hear the supernal voice of God declare: *"This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased!" p.1504:5