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Notes: Christmas Vesper: Pleasure and Happiness, 1946

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TEXT Christmas Vesper THEME Dec. 19, 1946

OCCASION

Simple
Hall Vesper
12/19/46
all known

Pleasure and Happiness

The first & last meaning of Christmas is that it commemorates the nativity of our Lord - the incarnation of the God-child in the person & form of a Child - the unprecedented and unrepeatable inclusion of the divine in the human - the beginning of the great drama of redemption which ended ³³ on a Cross -

2. But Christmas also has a great number of secondary implications for our life and thought, especially in our wayward & forgetful time - it has a way of pointing up some of our problems - of making us more deeply aware of some of the sharp contrasts and glaring inconsistencies which separate our world from God's world - it provides a high and holy place from which we can, at least momentarily, set things in their proper order.

Lines to mention - before

3. One of these is the ancient & now almost forgotten distinction between pleasure & happiness - this Christmas season - a great many people will celebrate on the level of pleasure - eat, drink, exchange presents, hear music, see beautiful things - one of the marks of pleasure, since it is normally associated with the senses, is that it is quite easy to get - one can acquire it without much effort - nor is it wrong in itself - it becomes wrong only when the world does what it has done these many years - makes the tragic mistake of identifying it with happiness - or makes it an end in itself - then something strange happens - the pleasure which we sought turns on us - becomes dust & ashes in our hands & rejects our life - pleasure gives way to a terrifying emptiness of heart & soul - a profound sense of disappointment & loss.

4. Now when that happens - as it has happened in our time - men & women often decide to seek - new pleasures, new stimuli for the jaded senses, new excitements - throw

a topic
next one

xx

else

Pleasures
Happiness

Christmas Vesper. Dec. 19, 1946

themselves into every new pleasure in the pathetic hope that the multiplication of pleasures will finally bring happiness - now, that new happiness - pleasures never make happiness, no matter how much you multiply it, it just cannot be done, though we are always trying to do it. The wrong arithmetic - the addition & multiplication of pleasures must finally end in subtraction - in a dup and lasting sense of loss - in a loneliness filled with ghosts - the reduction of life to the husks of memory & regret -

5. Another thing about pleasures - the anticipation of it is always greater than its realization - remember the Christmas of your childhood - the days before Christmas - the anticipation of new toys, the sight of the lighted tree, perhaps more candy & cookies - when Xmas finally came and we had played with the toys - and tasted the candy & blown out the last candle on the tree, did we not feel, as we retired, that somehow or other - somehow it had not quite come up to expectation - ^{unless} - it didn't, for no more pleasures ever do - even certain kinds of so-called happiness never do - men seek power - and when they get it - still unhappy - wealth - never quite they always want more & the wanting makes them work-out - unhappy - and so sex & drink - always a let-down.

6. But true happiness is a ^{very} different matter - it is a thing of the soul - a matter, not of tasting & seeing, but of knowing & thinking and believing - it goes far beyond whatever momentary pleasures life may bring to the still heights and depths of a new serenity of mind & soul - the peace of God - which the world cannot give & cannot take away.

