

A Personal Word for You

Mack McCarter

We will never leave our wounded in enemy hands

At the end of the 19th century, one of America's most renowned thinkers, William James, was asked to deliver the prestigious Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh. James drank deeply of the history, the contemporary scene and the future prospects of mankind living within community. His famous conclusion uttered in a single, poignant phrase was this: "If we are to renew society, what mankind must have is the moral equivalent of war!"

I first read that statement in April of 1981. I cannot tell you how deeply it burned itself into the very fiber of my being. I memorized it so I could ponder it wherever I went. That truth made its way down the longest highway in the universe--it journeyed over the treacherous paths that led from my head down to the deepest part of my heart. That eighteen inches from the top of our brains to the bottom of our hearts means the difference in reading a statement and letting a truth read you! It has now fully seized my life and I live to fulfill its promise.

I think of war. I have studied wars and their strategies from Punic to Peloponnesian up through modern times. I have read countless books on military strategy and the generals and nobles who propagated each plan. I have seen how war can totally mobilize the intelligence, the industry, and the resources of a society to achieve one goal—victory. In preparing for war and in waging that war, hearts are set ablaze and everything becomes subordinate to the goal. War becomes the unifying matrix of all of our energies and inventions and we wage it ferociously. To understand what James is saying, I think of war.

But there is something more important to think about. How can we ever transcend the destructive wreckage of war? We must copy all that war does to energize and mobilize for use on a higher plane. That was James' insight. It is the mobilization of all of our resources. It is the willingness to sacrifice all of our lives. It is the inspiration of all of our best thinking to marshal our collective energy to see that our children and their children can inherit a world of joy and peace and caring and love.

Today, here in our cities, I see thousands rallying to that banner. I see the moral equivalent of war beginning to grasp us and use us in effective ways. I see "that the weapons we fight with...have divine power to overcome strongholds." (II. Cor. 10:4)

Jerome Cox reminded us of the creed of the Airborne Rangers, his former branch of service. Giving the keynote speech at our Adult Renewal Academy banquet, he read part of the Rangers' Creed: "We will never leave our wounded in the hands of the enemy."

Yes! That faceless enemy is here and everywhere. And so, against this ruthless enemy that destroys hope and takes the sparkle from the eyes of children, against this heartless enemy that blows up families and steals minds with opiates, against this soulless enemy that spoils future generations by ravaging neighborhoods, we must ever resolve to join an army of caring human beings who will march off to a new kind of warfare and **"never leave our wounded in the hands of the enemy."** That is community renewal!