

A message from Rabbi Sidney H. Brooks was read to the Congregation at Friday night and Saturday morning services following the assassination on November 22 of President John F. Kennedy. The message, sent by Rabbi Brooks from Atlantic City, N. J., where he had been called by family illness, follows:

This is a tragic hour of sorrow for the family and loved ones of John F. Kennedy. They have lost a husband and father, brother and son.

This is a tragic hour of mourning for our Nation. Our Country has lost a man sworn to defend with his life our democracy and the civil liberties which make it meaningful.

This is a tragic hour of shame for all those whose hatred contributed to every act of violence that has injured and hurt and killed from the least to the greatest of our Nation's people. These have surrendered even more of self respect and dignity.

This is a tragic hour of pain for men and women all over our World who would wish to resolve their differences peacefully and to live with each other in Harmony; who dream of a life secure and hope of life for all mankind. These have lost yet more of the dream of civilized harmony among men.

Our prayers tonight cannot but have deeper significance as in fervent devotion we reflect upon the tender thread that separates us from destruction and the brittle defence that shields us from the insane, violent action of men.

We turn to our God—a God of love and mercy, and Justice. We turn to our Jewish tradition—in all goodness, truth and kindness and from God we beseech a comfort for the family of our President, for our Nation and the World.

Expressions of sorrow however deep have little meaning if we cannot at the same time better understand both the good and the evil inherent in tragedy.

At this early hour even before the details can possibly be clear a great deal is certain. It was not a bullet which felled our President but the irrational hatred of one man who pulled a trigger, exploding the prejudice and insanity of many millions of others. The inherent evil which killed our President and still endangers our Nation and the World is the same evil which has killed and endangered and bombed others, be they children or adults, white or black. The inherent evil which killed our President is the abuse of power, not just the power of a rifle, but the power of Government officials to abuse the rights of office by refusing to abide by the laws of our land and deliberately procrastinating in their duty to give every citizen the right to which he has always been entitled. The inherent evil which struck down the life of John F. Kennedy is our stubborn insistence upon the use of strength to solve our differences.

These in all facets comprise the evil which felled our President.

John F. Kennedy is dead. He lies in death with the men of all ages, men of humble station, and men of greatness, even with little children, who in our land, too, have been laid as sacrifices upon the altar of freedom. But no great and good and thoughtful idea can be killed. What John F. Kennedy stood for above partisan politics in his defense of civil rights and his champion of equality for all people of our land will not die. Others may yet have to pay the price of their life for the final winning of those rights.

We, together with all of our fellow Americans, pay tribute to our President. We pay our tribute in sorrow and in sadness, with honor and with dignity the heritage of the United States demands of us.

But we pay tribute also in our own conscience for whenever we put our hands to violence or our hearts to deceit, whenever we destroy the rights of others which we demand for ourselves we too assassinate goodness and dignities and our self pride and honor.

Death shall not finalize what our President has said or done that contributed to the welfare of our Nation or the freedom of anyone anywhere. Great thoughts live forever as indeed they shall in the memory of mankind and in the name of John F. Kennedy.

May the memory of John F. Kennedy be a blessing and may his death even more than his life shock us to our senses, urge us to goodness, lead us to honesty in our dealings with each other.

May God enfold the sould of John F. Kennedy in His mercy and may He bless with His wisdom and strength the leadership of Lyndon Johnson upon whose shoulders falls the mantle of leadership as President of the United States.

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THAT DAY WITH GOD

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