

REN BRE 1.35

Where Are The Nine?

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Seven years ago the English-speaking world was conscious of coming doom. The cloud of terror which appeared as a man's hand at Munich had almost blotted out the sky. Religious people wondered whether there would ever be security and peace again. Those who lived on the American continent doubted whether our free and careless world would ever laugh and play. We were frightened and many prayed hardly expecting deliverance.

One Sunday morning in September a voice from London told us we were at war. The rest is like a dream. The Athenia was sunk, wives looked furtively at their husbands and fathers at their sons. Transports crossed the Atlantic in the winter night. Then came Dunkirk, Moscow and Pearl Harbor. In the darkest hours we vowed that if victory came we would never forget the lessons we had learned.

A miracle has happened. At the present time the American continent has material wealth and power undreamed of in the past. The four freedoms are ours and still we are not free. At the moment of victory men began to doubt whether there was any future for mankind. Our mechanical age has forgotten God and has no one to thank any more. We don't know how to sing and have forgotten how to pray.

There was a day when Jesus on the road healed ten lepers and one of them finding that his living death was over, came running back to pour his grateful soul at the Saviour's feet. "Where are the nine?" asked Christ, and he must be deaf indeed who does not hear in that question the sadness of God.

Canada ought to be the happiest land in the world. With only twelve million people we have the greatest unexplored treasure area in the world. We have become one of the great industrial powers and yet if a man from Mars read our newspapers he would think that we had no hope. Race against race; capital against labor; Province against

Province— what has happened to us?

We can imagine God crying out in the words of Isaiah as He looks at Canada, "What more could have been done in my vineyard that I have not done?" There were a million praying beside their radios in nineteen thirty nine—they got their request—where are they today?

We are not speaking now to those who acknowledge no God. They have their philosophy and their own comfort. But for those who believe in Providence and in prayer it is not unfair to ask how often we thank God for what He has done for us. Here is a woman whose son is in a prison camp in Germany. She bears up bravely and sometimes says: "If this war ever ends and he comes back nothing else will ever matter." That was two years ago. The war has ended. The boy is home, his two brothers are in the navy and the other in the air force are a little army in the house. She is washing dishes all day. It is hard to sing. But praise is contagious. One woman with praise to God in her heart will start others singing. Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch and St. Francis of Assisi understood the secret of a thankful heart.

It is a troubled tangled world we live in. God knows there is enough darkness without our doing anything by sullen cynicism to make it worse. The real Christian is one whose note is praise. Did you ever think that because of you others may face life valiantly, and may thank God because you were born? In easy days any one can be cheerful. But when the hour of testing comes the Christian lifts his song. Chesterton has spoken for The Soul of Man:

Though giant rains put out the sun

Here stand I for a sign.

Though earth be filled with waters dark

My cup is filled with wine.

Tell to the trembling priests that here

Under the deluge trod,

One nameless, tattered broken man

Stood up and drank to God.