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Second Inaugural Address

Washington, D.C.
March 4, 1865

This theologically intense speech has been widely acknowledged as one of the most remarkable documents in American history. The *London Spectator* said of it, "We cannot read it without a renewed conviction that it is the noblest political document known to history, and should have for the nation and the statesmen he left behind him something of a sacred and almost prophetic character."

Journalist Noah Brooks, who witnessed the speech, said that as Lincoln advanced from his seat, "a roar of applause shook the air, and, again and again repeated, finally died away on the outer fringe of the throng, like a sweeping wave upon the shore. Just at that moment the sun, which had been obscured all day, burst forth in its unclouded meridian splendor, and flooded the spectacle with glory and with light." Brooks said Lincoln told him the next day, "Did you notice that sunburst? It made my heart jump."

According to Brooks, the audience received the speech in "profound silence," although some passages provoked cheers and applause. "Looking down into the faces of the people, illuminated by the bright rays of the sun, one could see moist eyes and even tearful faces."

Brooks also observed, "But chiefly memorable in the mind of those who saw that second inauguration must still remain the tall, pathetic, melancholy figure of the man who, then inducted into office in the midst of the glad acclaim of thousands of people, and illumined by the deceptive brilliance of a March sunburst, was already standing in the shadow of death." He was referring, of course, to Lincoln's sudden death by assassination only weeks after the speech.

At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention, and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it--all sought to avert it. While the inaugural [sic] address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to *saving* the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to *destroy* it without war--seeking to dissole [sic] the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the *cause* of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has his own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope--ferverently do we pray--that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether"

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan--to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

Source: *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by Roy P. Basler et al.

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On March 4, 1865, only 41 days before his assassination, President Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office for the second time. Lincoln's second inaugural address previewed his plans for healing a once-divided nation. The speech is engraved on the north interior wall of the Lincoln Memorial.

Listen to Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

"...With malice toward none, with charity for all..." Lincoln's second inaugural address continues to inspire and evoke. Listen to Lincoln actor and historian Jim Getty recite Lincoln's second inaugural address.

DURATION: 5 minutes, 1 second



Digital View of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

CyArk.org's digital view of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address on the north wall of the Lincoln Memorial. There is no audio in this clip.

DURATION: 30 seconds

Read Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

"Fellow countrymen: at this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement somewhat in detail of a course to be pursued seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends is as well known to the public as to myself and it is I trust reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

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"With malice toward none with charity for all with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right let us strive on to finish the work we are in to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan ~ to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Last updated: April 18, 2020

CONTACT THE PARK

Mailing Address:

900 Ohio Drive SW
Washington , DC 20024

Phone:

(202) 426-6841

Elements of Persuasive Speech

Learn from the Greeks:

- **PATHOS:** Appeal to the emotions, values or prejudices of the audience.
- **LOGOS:** Appeal to logic or reason.
- **ETHOS:** Ask for the audience to believe or agree with the speaker based on their credibility/trustworthiness.

Elements of an appeal:

- Acknowledge an opponent and/or their opposing viewpoint or argument
- Cite evidence from credible authorities, make historical references or quote well-known texts
- Mention an individual's experience or tell a story from personal history
- Compare/contrast events, things, ideas
- Use figurative language, such as metaphors, similes, alliteration

Knowing your audience is essential to an effective persuasive speech.

Examples from Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

- Acknowledge an opposing viewpoint or argument:
 - "Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish..."
 - "It may seem strange that any men should dare ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged."
- Historical references or allusions: "Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." (Bible, New Testament, Matthew 18:7)
- Individual experience: "...to care for *him who shall have borne the battle* and for *his widow* and *his orphan*..."
- Comparison: "Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other."
- Comparison/contrast: "Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish..."
- Figurative language (Metaphor): "...to bind up the nation's wounds..."