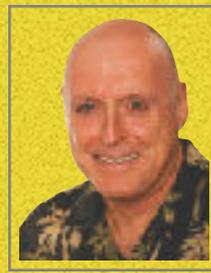


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



955 The Incredible Power of 271 Words

It was a speech that the author and speaker thought would quickly be forgotten. It wasn't. That's next, on The Extra Point.

Last Friday marked the 157th anniversary of what some historians and others believe was the greatest speech ever made.

It was only 271 words, and if 271 words were ever used for a greater purpose, it could only have been from God Himself in the Bible.

It was four and a half months after the Battle of Gettysburg. On the afternoon of November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln joined a large crowd to dedicate the Soldiers' National Cemetery.

The event began with prayers, then the playing of songs, which was followed by a nearly two-hour speech from politician, diplomat, and famed orator Edward Everett. After a hymn, Lincoln stepped forward to deliver the dedication.

In his short presentation, Lincoln led people to remember the birth of a nation, gave respect to the conflict and those who had been lost, and then focused on the present. That present includes us, and all who will follow us.

Some people have never heard Lincoln's words, and many more have forgotten them. I'm going to read them now. I hope you will draw from them the meaning that applies to each of us at this very moment.

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.

We are met on a great battlefield of that war.

We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate — we can not consecrate — we can not hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract.

The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Generation after generation of Americans have come and gone since Abraham Lincoln spoke these 271 words.

Twenty-one years later, on July 4, 1884, the people of France delivered the completed Statue of Liberty, as a commemoration of the friendship between France and the United States. Over 12 million people came from all over the world, passing that statue, many fleeing repressive regimes, seeking a new start where something called freedom existed. Two of those people who saw that statue and sought that freedom were my grandparents, though they didn't know each other at the time.

(Con't.)

They met, were married, and had two children, one of them my mother, when the Spanish Flu struck America. Two more kids would come afterwards.

I've recently thought, what words could I use to tell my grandparents that the America and the freedom they hungered for, has in large part been given away to elitist politicians and corporate barons who have decided they know best how we all should live.

Not even three generations have been born since my grandparents passed away. Eight generations have come since Lincoln gave his Gettysburg address. What would he think if he could see the state of the country he led?

"...this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom...and that government of the people — not of the elite few — by the people, not by politicians corporations have bought and paid for — for the people...for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Just 271 words, which should not be forgotten.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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